

Local Government Planning and Zoning: Environmental Equity and Public Participation Considerations

Observations from a Calvert County
Planner

Presentation Outline

- Ethical issues
- How Planners Plan
- Planning Objectives and Tools
- How can we integrate environmental equity into local process?
- How can public participation be improved?
- How can state and local government work together?

Ethical Principles in Planning

- **The planning process must continuously pursue and faithfully serve the public interest.**
- Planning process participants continuously strive to achieve high standards of integrity and proficiency so that public respect for the planning process will be maintained.
- APA members who are practicing planners continuously pursue improvement in their planning competence as well as in the development of peers and aspiring planners. They recognize that enhancement of planning as a profession leads to greater public respect for the planning process and thus serves the public interest.

The planning process must continuously pursue and faithfully serve the public interest.

- Recognize the rights of citizens to participate in planning decisions;
- Strive to give citizens (including those who lack formal organization or influence) full, clear and accurate information on planning issues and the opportunity to have a meaningful role in the development of plans and programs;
- Strive to expand choice and opportunity for all persons, recognizing a special responsibility to plan for the needs of disadvantaged groups and persons;**
- Assist in the clarification of community goals, objectives and policies in plan-making;
- Ensure that reports, records and any other non-confidential information which is, or will be, available to decision makers is made available to the public in a convenient format and sufficiently in advance of any decision;
- Strive to protect the integrity of the natural environment and the heritage of the built environment;**
- Pay special attention to the interrelatedness of decisions and the long range consequences of present actions.

Participation Objectives

- Establish the legitimacy of your agency and process
- Getting to know about affected interests
- Identifying problems and solutions
- Search for consensus

Participation Tools

- Those that distribute information
- Those that receive information
- Those that identify problems
- Those that identify solutions
- Those that search for consensus

Those that distribute information

- Public notices
- Flyers and fact sheets
- Slide and audio visual presentations
- mailings
- media publications

Those that receive information

- public meetings
- field trips
- forums
- surveys/ questionnaires
- workshops/nominal groups
- community visioning
- focus groups/open houses

Those that identify problems

- nominal groups
- forums
- liaisons (reps from all contacts groups)
- monitoring mass media and org.
publications
- working meetings

Those that identify solutions

- community visioning
- open meetings
- nominal groups
- hiring an advocate for affected interests
- conducting a charrette

Those that search for consensus

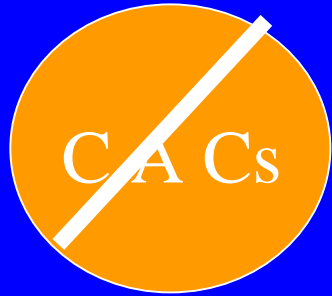
- working meetings
- liaisons
- nominal group
- making use of existing organizations
- mediating between different interests

Land Use and Zoning Issues

- After the Industrial Revolution . . .
Incompatible Land Uses
- Zoning philosophies over the years
- Consequences of “sprawl”
- Smart growth (back to towns and cities)
- Regulating impacts of land uses

Integrating Environmental Equity into the Local Process

- Equal Voice vs. Every Voice Heard
- County Initiated vs. Applicant Initiated
- Regulating Impacts Through Performance Standards



How Can Participation be Improved?



- More emphasis on Comprehensive Planning
- Adopt state standards for planning that require more inclusive planning techniques
- Support having advocates for interest groups that are under represented.